

Todd R. Hanneken, “The Book of *Jubilees*.” Prepared for *Early Jewish Literature: An Introduction and Reader*, edited by Archie T. Wright, Ron Herms and Brad Embry. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017.

Introduction to *Jubilees*

Introduction

The book of *Jubilees* describes itself in the prologue and first chapter as the angelic dictation to Moses from the heavenly tablets the day after the “first law” was given to Moses (Exodus 24). This revelation retells the basic story of Genesis and the first half of Exodus, with frequent additions, deletions, summaries, and alternate versions of stories. *Jubilees* infuses Genesis and Exodus with other parts of scripture, including Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Isaiah, Psalms, and the *Book of the Watchers*. Besides solving interpretive problems (see the sidebar on early biblical interpretation), *Jubilees* traces legal issues, including festival calendar, to Genesis and asserts the eternality of the laws, originating well before Sinai and enduring forever after. The introduction suggests its contents will cover “all time,” but in fact *Jubilees* makes only short predictions of the progress of history after Moses. It seems the laws and calendar described in *Jubilees* are for all time, not that all events of history are recorded in *Jubilees*.

The Four Assumptions of Early Biblical Interpretation according to James Kugel

Jubilees is a prime example of early biblical interpretation. James Kugel describes four assumptions that distinguish early from modern biblical interpretation. The first assumption is that the Bible is **cryptic**—it means more or other than what it appears to mean. For example, *Jubilees* interprets “on the day you eat of it you shall surely die” to mean “in the millennium you eat of it you shall surely die.” The second assumption is that the Bible is **perfect**. This plays out on multiple levels. Stories are perfect in that they do not contradict themselves. For example, *Jubilees* explains the apparent contradiction on whether male and female were created at the same time. The woman was created at the same time as the man, even though she was not transformed from a rib to the familiar form until a week later. The Bible as a whole is perfect in that any part of the Bible belongs to the same story as any other part. For example, Psalm 90 can be used to fill in the blanks in Genesis to decode the above example of a day in heaven as the equivalent to a millennium on earth. Characters are perfect examples of virtue or vice, such that Jacob did not really lie to Isaac, and Esau was perfectly wicked. The religious practices of ancient ancestors are perfectly consistent with later religious practices, such as observance of Sabbath, festivals, prayer and priesthood. The third assumption is that the Bible is **relevant**. A modern interpreter might say that Genesis was written earlier than the crisis of Hellenistic assimilation and the practice of nude athletics, and therefore does not address the issue of public nudity. *Jubilees* finds relevance to contemporary issues, however, by interpreting the statement that God made garments for Adam and Eve as a prohibition of nakedness. The fourth assumption is that the Bible is **divine**. Whereas Genesis itself makes no claim of authorship or divine inspiration, *Jubilees* insists that Genesis, along with the testimony of its interpretation, was revealed from the heavenly tablets.

Date and Purpose

Antiochus Epiphanes

King Antiochus IV Epiphanes ruled the Seleucid Empire from 175–164 BCE. He is remembered in Jewish sources (especially 1–2 Maccabees, Daniel, and Josephus) as a bad king, with the possible exception of repentance on his deathbed. Between his persistent need of funding for his military campaigns and his promotion of Hellenistic culture, he was frequently in conflict with Jerusalem, particularly the Temple and the high priesthood. His suppression of Jewish religious independence led to the Maccabean revolt.

Jubilees is part of the flourishing of literary activity around the time of the Maccabean revolt. The book reflects the Hellenistic crisis and at least some of the events under the reign of **Antiochus Epiphanes** (175–164 BCE), such as the crisis over the high priesthood, civil war, and invasion. A comparison with 1 Maccabees shows many parallels and echoes with events of the 160s BCE, perhaps up to the peaceful retreat of the **Seleucid** army in 159. *Jubilees* seems not to be aware of Jonathan's consolidation of the high priesthood and kingship in 152, although some scholars believe the book, or its final form, was completed shortly before the oldest known copy of the book from the last quarter of the second century BCE. Even though the book is not an account of recent events, the Maccabean revolt significantly influences the ideas of the book. Consequently, the book can be compared to other responses to the revolt, such as the *Animal Apocalypse*, Daniel, and 1–2 Maccabees.

If, as seems likely, the book was composed between 159 and 152 BCE, it gives us special insight into the transitional period in Judaism in which there is no recorded high priest (called the *intersacerdotium*), the **Hasmonean dynasty** had not yet been established, Seleucid political presence was reduced, and Judea was recovering from devastating war and famine. It stands to reason that this was a time of reconstruction in which *Jubilees*' proposals on theological and legal (including calendarical) issues were made in a relative vacuum. This would explain the lack of sectarian polemic against other Jews, and strong emphasis on Jewish unity. Within a matter of decades, powerful voices would develop in Judaism and reject the positions in *Jubilees*. Those who continued to accept the legitimacy of *Jubilees* would become marginalized. Consequently, *Jubilees* is central to understanding the development of Jewish sectarianism in the Hasmonean period, and should probably be viewed as representative of the early cusp of views that were not yet marginalized or suppressed by a dominant authority.

Jubilees seems to assume an audience that already accepts the authority of the Torah and the importance of following it according to one interpretation or another. For example, part of the debate about circumcision is not whether to practice it, but whether it could be rescheduled from the eighth day (presumably for reasons such as Sabbath or illness). Even if the first-hand audience consisted of religious Jews, the book also responds indirectly to the Hellenistic assimilationists whose position is described in 1 Maccabees 1:11–15.

In those days certain renegades came out from Israel and misled many, saying, "Let us go and make a covenant with the Gentiles around us, for since we separated from them many disasters have come upon us." This proposal pleased them, and some of the people eagerly went to the king, who authorized them to observe the ordinances of the Gentiles. So they built a gymnasium in Jerusalem, according to Gentile custom, and

removed the marks of circumcision, and abandoned the holy covenant.

They joined with the Gentiles and sold themselves to do evil. (NRSV)

Several of the emphases in *Jubilees* can be understood as responses to this position. First, *Jubilees* calls for absolute separation from gentiles, and specifically rejects the suggestion of a covenant between Isaac and the Philistines in Genesis. *Jubilees* also rejects “since we separated” by insisting that Israel was separated from all the other nations by God from the first week of creation, and destined to remain separated forever. *Jubilees* 1 and 23 explain “disasters” as punishment for failure to separate from gentiles. The gentile gymnasium (which included nude athletics) and foregoing of circumcision are emphatically rejected in *Jubilees*.

Author and Audience

Most scholars believe the book of *Jubilees* as we have it is the work of a single author who drew upon and reworked multiple sources. The author valued synthesis of received traditions more than originality. The attempt to reconcile traditions and interpretations in tension left certain seams in the final product. The work is complex and uses different rhetorical and literary styles, but coheres thoroughly in substance. It is possible, as some scholars believe, that different individuals are responsible for different sections, but they must have been very like-minded individuals.

The author leaves no autobiographical statements, but it stands to reason that the author had himself and his work in mind in describing the commission of the Levites, “[Jacob] gave all his books and the books of his fathers to his son Levi so that he could preserve them and renew them for his sons until today” (*Jub.* 45:16). The book also praises Levi and priests at length. *Jubilees* treats Levi as a priest and generally does not distinguish between priests and Levites, so there is a lack of evidence by which to speculate if the author was a priest. The author’s ideas generally fit with what little we know about the **Hasidim**. In later times the Essenes would agree with *Jubilees* on many issues. It stands to reason that *Jubilees* influenced the Essenes, but that does not mean the author identified with this or any sect. The emphasis on Jewish unity indicates the author predates or resists such sectarian divisions.

There have been no thorough studies of the social setting of *Jubilees*, but some elements may be consistent with the results of sociological studies of Ben Sira, earlier in the second century. The book both promotes and reflects thorough study, and is so complex that sustained instruction would have been necessary to fully appreciate it. The emphasis on choosing a proper wife may have been particularly salient for adolescent males. The repeated descriptions of learning to read and write function primarily to reinforce the authority, antiquity, and reliability of the written word, going back to the heavenly tablets. Secondarily, however, the many instances of angels and parents teaching must reflect the circumstance of the author in some way (perhaps even an academic calendar in *Jub.* 12:27, where Abraham studies during the six rainy months). It would be impossible to speak precisely of “schools” in *Jubilees*. If anything, the imagery of teaching “all Israel” and lack of elitism would suggest a more public form of instruction than what Ben Sira seems to reflect. This issue remains a desideratum for future study.

Text, Transmission, and Influence

Jubilees was written in Hebrew. Fourteen Hebrew copies were found near Qumran (see especially DJD 13 [1994]). Although these manuscripts preserve only a small portion of the complete work, they

support the general reliability of the Ethiopic version. From Hebrew the work was copied into Greek and perhaps Syriac, and from Greek into Latin and Ethiopic. Citations are preserved in several Greek and Syriac works. Part of one Latin copy has survived. Twenty-seven copies, some going back to about the fourteenth century, were preserved in Ethiopic and were used to produce J.C. VanderKam's definitive critical text and English translation (1989), which is used in this introduction and reader. R.H. Charles' translation (1902, 1917) is widely available because it is in the public domain. A translation also appears in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (1985).

Jubilees was cited and used as authoritative scripture in the *Damascus Document* and other texts among the Dead Sea Scrolls. In the subsequent centuries it would retain this authoritative status only in the Church of Ethiopia. Although echoes of use (more for trivia than as scriptural authority) can be found in other areas of Judaism and Christianity, the book largely fell out of circulation, and was lost to Europeans until it was "discovered" by missionaries to Ethiopia and gained scholarly attention in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The claim of angelic dictation to Moses was rejected by Europeans, who placed it in the category "Pseudepigrapha" (falsely attributed writings).

Even though *Jubilees* is not used in Rabbinic Literature, the New Testament, or most Jewish and Christian writings, *Jubilees* is helpful for understanding the intellectual milieu of Judaism in antiquity. Scholars have often noted the differences between *Jubilees* and the Mishnah on legal rulings, but it could also be noted that many of the questions and methods reflect common discourse. Many of the narrative expansions and interpretations in rabbinic literature are first attested in *Jubilees*. The rabbinic idea of Oral Torah can be compared to the premise of *Jubilees*, an expansive testimony given to Moses in addition to the Torah, although the differences are substantial. Similarly, *Jubilees* seems not to have been used by the authors of the New Testament, but does reflect several theological debates and ideas picked up in the New Testament. For example, *Jubilees* exemplifies the methods of biblical interpretation found especially in passages such as Stephen's speech in Acts 7. *Jubilees* casts light on Jewish interpretation of the *Book of the Watchers*, and ideas about the agency of angels and demons. Certain ideas or motifs presumed in the New Testament, such as angelic mediation of the Torah at Sinai, are attested first or only in *Jubilees*. A work as long and coherent as *Jubilees* offers invaluable insight into the history of Jewish thought and literature, even if the specific positions proposed were excluded from the forms of Judaism and Christianity that retained dominance.

Theology

Jubilees adapts the portrayal of God in Genesis and Exodus to maintain God's absolute omniscience, omnipotence, and transcendence. For example, God went through no process of discovery or learning in finding a partner for Adam or determining the wickedness of Sodom. God does not have partners in creation, such as angels or elements of creation bringing forth other elements of creation. God is removed from unbecoming deeds, such as trying to kill Moses and hardening Pharaoh's heart. *Jubilees* also establishes at length God's perfect justice. Sinners are warned before their judgment. The punishment for crimes is fixed and absolute (although Israel has the opportunity for atonement). Judgment is not delayed or deferred until a final day of judgment. *Jubilees* often makes use of angels and demons, adapted from the tradition exemplified by the *Book of the Watchers*, in order to maintain God's transcendence and

justice. Mastema, a figure resembling the accuser (*satan*) in the prologue to Job, takes on the unbecoming roles attributed to God. Demons serve the purpose of punishing the wicked, especially the gentiles but also Jews who draw near to gentiles. Demons do not have power over the righteous or explain unjust suffering. Mastema takes the shame for inciting the Egyptians to pursue the Israelites into the sea, but does not get credit for any successful evil against Israel, such as throwing babies into the Nile. In general, angels are relevant as mediators of a transcendent and omnipotent God. They carry out God's plan, but they do not impinge on human responsibility, or interfere in the direct relationship between God and Israel.

Mastema

The figure of Mastema first appears in the book of *Jubilees*, usually as "Prince Mastema" or "prince of Mastema." The word is attested earlier in Hosea 9 as a common noun meaning "hostility." In *Jubilees* the figure is a member of the heavenly court who is responsible for punishment and evil spirits. Mastema appears whenever unbecoming actions are attributed to God in Genesis-Exodus. Mastema is linked to the rise of idolatry in the generations before Abraham (cf. Joshua 24:2), and becomes the foil for Abraham's defeat of idolatry. Mastema takes on the role of the accuser in the prologue to Job, which explains the real reason why an omniscient God would propose such a cruel test as the sacrifice of Isaac. Mastema, rather than God, tries and fails to kill Moses on the way to Egypt. *Jubilees* uses the figure to explain why the Egyptian magicians are able to perform some plagues. Mastema, not God, is directly responsible for the hardening of Pharaoh's heart and the massacres attributed to God in Exodus. In all cases, Mastema is put to shame and easily bound whenever his services are not required.

Summary

For length, coherence, and antiquity, *Jubilees* is one of the most significant works of early Jewish literature. It represents a major stage in Jewish history, as Jerusalem emerged from a crisis of confrontation with Hellenistic culture and empire. *Jubilees* finds a plan for Jewish identity in the interpretation of the traditional books. At the same time, *Jubilees* solves problems in Genesis and Exodus, particularly when God or national heroes appear in unflattering light. *Jubilees* reconstructs the heavenly tablets that dictate God's perfect justice and the proper behavior for God's people. Even as most of Judaism and Christianity went on to reject the claim of revelation and many of the teachings, the same basic tools of narrative and legal exegesis continued to thrive. Through those Jews who did accept the heavenly tablets as presented therein, the book would go on to be copied, cited, rewritten, and interpreted as scripture. *Jubilees* is therefore essential to understanding the communities that produced the Dead Sea Scrolls. The study of *Jubilees* can also give us broader insight into the formation of group identity, including early Christianity, based on claims of revelation, biblical interpretation, and legal innovation.

Discussion Questions

- 1) Most biblical interpretation today claims to be the product of human study, with little or no divine inspiration relative to the interpreted text. *Jubilees*, however, claims to have been revealed from the same basic source, at the same basic time as the Torah. Does this claim to authority enhance,

diminish, or displace the authority of Genesis? Was the author of *Jubilees* lying when claiming the book was revealed to Moses at Sinai?

- 2) How does *Jubilees* compare to other Jewish texts that deal with questions of the proper relationship to Greek culture?
- 3) What are the implications of the claim that Jewish laws and institutions were established long before the time of Moses?
- 4) How is “instruction” portrayed in *Jubilees*, and what might that indicate about instruction at the time of composition, or the social function of the book itself?

Further Readings

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Jubilees Prologue through Chapter 6

Translation by James C. VanderKam

Notes by Todd R. Hanneken

Prologue and Setting

These are the words regarding the divisions of the times¹ of the law and of the testimony, of the events of the years, of the weeks of their jubilees throughout all the years of eternity as he related (them) to Moses on Mt. Sinai when he went up to receive the stone tablets—the law and the commandments—on the Lord’s orders as he had told him that he should come up to the summit of the mountain.

1:1 During the first year of the Israelites’ exodus from Egypt, in the third month—on the sixteenth of the month²—the Lord said to Moses: “Come up to me on the mountain. I will give you the two stone tablets of the law and the commandments which I have written so that you may teach them.”

1:2 So Moses went up the mountain of the Lord. The glory of the Lord took up residence on Mt. Sinai, and a cloud covered it for six days. 1:3 When he summoned Moses into the cloud on the seventh day, he saw the glory of the Lord like a fire blazing on the summit of the mountain. 1:4 Moses remained on the mountain for forty days and forty nights while the Lord showed him what (had happened) beforehand as well as what was to come. He related to him the divisions of all the times—both of the law and of the testimony. 1:5 He said to him: “Pay attention to all the words which I tell you on this mountain. Write (them) in a book so that their offspring may see that I have not abandoned them because of all the evil they have done in straying from the covenant between me and you which I am making today on Mt. Sinai for their offspring. 1:6 So it will be that when all of these things befall them they will recognize that I have been more faithful than they in all their judgments and in all their actions. They will recognize that I have indeed been with them.

Sin, Punishment, Repentance, and Restoration Predicted³

1:7 “Now you write this entire message which I am telling you today, because I know their defiance and their stubbornness (even) before I bring them into the land which I promised by oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: ‘To your posterity I will give the land which flows with milk and honey’. When they eat and are full, 1:8 they will turn to foreign gods—to ones which will not save them from any of their afflictions. Then this testimony will serve as evidence. 1:9 For they will forget all my commandments—everything that I command them—and will follow the nations, their impurities, and their shame. They will serve their gods, and (this) will prove an obstacle for them—an affliction, a pain, and a trap. 1:10 Many will be destroyed. They will be captured and will fall into the enemy’s control because they abandoned my statutes, my commandments, my covenantal festivals, my sabbaths, my holy things which I have hallowed for myself among them, my tabernacle, and my temple which I sanctified for myself in the middle of the land so that I could set my name on it and that it could live (there).

¹ Among the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Ethiopic tradition the book is referred to as the book of the Divisions of the Times, or simply, Divisions.

² The day after the renewal of the covenant.

³ The language and theology of this section closely resembles Deuteronomy, especially 31:16–21.

1:11 They made for themselves high places, (sacred) groves, and carved images; each of them prostrated himself before his own in order to go astray. They will sacrifice their children to demons and to every product (conceived by) their erring minds. 1:12 I will send witnesses to them so that I may testify to them, but they will not listen and will kill the witnesses. They will persecute those too who study the law diligently. They will abrogate everything and will begin to do evil in my presence. 1:13 Then I will hide my face from them. I will deliver them into the control of the nations for captivity, for booty, and for being devoured. I will remove them from the land and disperse them among the nations. 1:14 They will forget all my law, all my commandments, and all my verdicts. They will err regarding the beginning of the month, the sabbath, the festival, the jubilee, and the decree.

1:15 “After this they will return to me from among the nations with all their minds, all their souls, and all their strength. Then I will gather them from among all the nations, and they will search for me so that I may be found by them when they have searched for me with all their minds and with all their souls. I will rightly disclose to them abundant peace. 1:16 I will transform them into a righteous plant with all my mind and with all my soul. They will become a blessing, not a curse; they will become the head, not the tail. 1:17 I will build my temple among them and will live with them; I will become their God and they will become my true and righteous people. 1:18 I will neither abandon them nor become alienated from them, for I am the Lord their God.”

1:19 Then Moses fell prostrate and prayed and said: “Lord my God, do not allow your people and your heritage to go along in the error of their minds, and do not deliver them into the control of the nations with the result that they rule over them lest they make them sin against you. 1:20 May your mercy, Lord, be lifted over your people. Create for them a just spirit. May the spirit of Belial not rule over them so as to bring charges against them before you and to trap them away from every proper path so that they may be destroyed from your presence. 1:21 They are your people and your heritage whom you have rescued from Egyptian control by your great power. Create for them a pure mind and a holy spirit. May they not be trapped in their sins from now to eternity.”

1:22 Then the Lord said to Moses: “I know their contrary nature, their way of thinking, and their stubbornness. They will not listen until they acknowledge their sins and the sins of their ancestors.

1:23 After this they will return to me in a fully upright manner and with all (their) minds and all (their) souls. I will cut away the foreskins of their minds and the foreskins of their descendants’ minds. I will create a holy spirit for them and will purify them in order that they may not turn away from me from that time forever. 1:24 Their souls will adhere to me and to all my commandments. They will perform my commandments. I will become their father and they will become my children. 1:25 All of them will be called children of the living God. Every angel and every spirit will know them. They will know that they are my children and that I am their father in a just and proper way and that I love them.

The Divine Commission of the Book of Jubilees

1:26 “Now you write all these words which I tell you on this mountain: what is first and what is last and what is to come during all the divisions of time which are in the law and which are in the testimony and in the weeks of their jubilees until eternity—until the time when I descend and live with them throughout all the ages of eternity.”

1:27 Then he said to an angel of the presence:⁴ “Dictate to Moses (starting) from the beginning of the creation until the time when my temple is built among them throughout the ages of eternity. 1:28 The Lord will appear in the sight of all, and all will know that I am the God of Israel, the father of all Jacob’s children, and the king on Mt. Zion for the ages of eternity. Then Zion and Jerusalem will become holy.”

1:29 The angel of the presence, who was going along in front of the Israelite camp, took the tablets (which told) of the divisions of the years from the time the law and the testimony were created—for the weeks of their jubilees, year by year in their full number, and their jubilees from [the time of the creation until]⁵ the time of the new creation when the heavens, the earth, and all their creatures will be renewed like the powers of the sky and like all the creatures of the earth, until the time when the temple of the Lord will be created in Jerusalem on Mt. Zion. All the luminaries will be renewed for (the purpose of) healing, health, and blessing for all the elect ones of Israel⁶ and so that it may remain this way from that time throughout all the days of the earth.

Creation in Six Days

Genesis 1:1 (NRSV adjusted to reflect literal Hebrew text) In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, 1:2 the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. 1:3 Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. 1:4 And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the

Jubilees 2:1 On the Lord’s orders the angel of the presence said to Moses: “Write all the words about the creation—how in six days the Lord God completed all his works, everything that he had created, and kept sabbath on the seventh day. He sanctified it for all ages and set it as a sign for all his works. 2:2 For on the first day he created the heavens that are above, the earth, the waters, and all the spirits who serve before him, namely: the angels of the presence; the angels of holiness; the angels of the spirits of fire; the angels of the spirits of the winds; the angels of the spirits of the clouds, of darkness, snow, hail, and frost; the angels of the sounds, the thunders, and the lightnings; and the angels of the spirits of cold and heat, of winter, spring, autumn, and summer, and of all the spirits of his creatures which are in the heavens, on earth, and in every (place).⁷

⁴ The angel of the presence is modeled on Exodus 14:19; 23:20–23; and Isaiah 63:9.

⁵ VanderKam’s reconstruction, following a suggestion by Michael Stone, presupposes that a scribe’s eye jumped from the first to the second instance of “the time of.” It would be unusual, but possible, to understand the “new creation” as the original creation, when things were newly made. The “until” clause could refer to the creation of the sanctuary in Exodus. “In Jerusalem” could begin a new sentence describing the destiny of that sanctuary. The actual scope of *Jubilees* in fact covers from the original creation up through Exodus 24, just before the commandments for the creation of the sanctuary starting in Exodus 25.

⁶ The rest of the book emphasizes the unity of all Israel without any mention of an elect group or sect (other than Levi). It seems likely that “all the elect ones of Israel” should be understood as “all the chosen people, Israel.”

⁷ There are three classes of angels corresponding to three classes of humanity. The angels of the presence are like the Levites in that they serve in the temple (*Jub.* 31:14). The angels of holiness are like the Israelites in the observance of Sabbath (*Jub.* 2:18) and circumcision (*Jub.* 15:27). The angels of nature correspond to the gentiles (*Jub.* 15:31), and do not rest on the sabbath (rivers continue to flow).

light from the darkness. 1:5 God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

[There were also] the depths, darkness and light, dawn and evening⁸ which he prepared through the knowledge of his mind. 2:3 Then we saw his works and blessed him. We offered praise before him regarding all his works because he had made seven great works on the first day.

1:6 And God said, “Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” 1:7 So God made the firmament and separated the waters that were under the firmament from the waters that were above the firmament. And it was so. 1:8 God called the firmament Heavens. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

2:4 On the second day he made a firmament between the waters, and the waters were divided on that day. Half of them went up above and half of them went down below the firmament (which was) in the middle above the surface of the whole earth. This was the only work that he made on the second day.

1:9 And God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. 1:10 God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. 1:11 Then God said, “Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.” And it was so. 1:12 The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. 1:13 And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

2:5 On the third day he did as he said to the waters that they should pass from the surface of the whole earth to one place and that the dry land should appear. 2:6 The waters did so, as he told them. They withdrew from the surface of the earth to one place apart from this firmament, and dry land appeared. 2:7 On that day he created for them all the seas—each with the places where they collected—all the rivers, and the places where the waters collected in the mountains and on the whole earth; all the reservoirs, all the dew of the earth; the seed that is sown—with each of its kinds—all that sprouts, the fruit trees, the forests, and the garden of Eden⁹ (which is) in Eden for enjoyment and for food. These four great types he made on the third day.

1:14 And God said, “Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, 1:15 and let them be lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth.”

2:8 On the fourth day the Lord made the sun, the moon, and the stars. He placed them in the heavenly firmament to shine on the whole earth, to rule over day and night, and to separate between light and darkness. 2:9 The

⁸ In Genesis 1 evening and morning seem to occur as by-products of creation, but are not directly willed by God (Gen. 1:5, etc.). *Jubilees* insists that all creation was directly willed by God. Similarly, in Genesis 1:11, 20 the earth brings forth vegetation and the waters bring forth fish. In *Jubilees* 2:5, 11 God has no assistants in creation.

⁹ In this and other ways *Jubilees* combines and reconciles the two creation stories in Genesis.

And it was so. 1:16 God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. 1:17 God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth, 1:18 to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. 1:19 And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

Lord appointed the sun¹⁰ as a great sign above the earth for days, sabbaths, months, festivals, years, sabbaths of years, jubilees, and all times of the years. 2:10 It separates between light and darkness and (serves) for wellbeing so that everything that sprouts and grows on the earth may prosper. These three types he made on the fourth day.

1:20 And God said, “Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the firmament of the heavens.” 1:21 So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. 1:22 God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” 1:23 And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

2:11 On the fifth day he created the great sea monsters within the watery depths, for these were the first animate beings made by his hands; all the fish that move about in the waters, all flying birds, and all their kinds. 2:12 The sun shone over them for (their) wellbeing and over everything that was on the earth—all that sprouts from the ground, all fruit trees, and all animate beings. These three kinds he made on the fifth day.

1:24 And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.” And it was so. 1:25 God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

2:13 On the sixth day he made all the land animals, all cattle, and everything that moves about on the earth.

1:26 Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” 1:27 So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. 1:28 God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” 1:29 God said,

2:14 After all this, he made mankind—as one man and a woman he made them.¹¹ He made him rule everything on earth and in the seas and over flying creatures, animals, cattle, everything that moves about on the earth, and the entire earth. Over all these he made him rule. These four kinds he made on the sixth day. 2:15 The total was 22 kinds.

¹⁰ *Jubilees* removes the moon from any role in determining calendar. See *Jub.* 6:36.

¹¹ See also *Jubilees* 3:8. *Jubilees* reconciles the two creation stories by asserting that in the first week God created one being (a combination of male and female), which in the second week was separated into two beings (one male and one female).

“See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. 1:30 And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. 1:31 God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

The Sabbath

2:1 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude.
2:2 And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. 2:3 So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

2:16 He finished all his works on the sixth day:¹² everything in heaven, on the earth, in the seas, in the depths, in the light, in the darkness, and in every place.
2:17 He gave us the sabbath day as a great sign so that we should perform work for six days¹³ and that we should keep sabbath from all work on the seventh day. 2:18 He told us—all the angels of the presence and all the angels of holiness (these two great kinds)—to keep sabbath with him in heaven and on earth.

2:19 He said to us: ‘I will now separate a people for myself from among my nations. They, too, will keep sabbath. I will sanctify the people for myself and will bless them as I sanctified the sabbath day. I will sanctify them for myself; in this way I will bless them. They will become my people and I will become their God. 2:20 I have chosen the descendants of Jacob among all of those whom I have seen. I have recorded them as my first-born son and have sanctified them for myself throughout the ages of eternity. I will tell them about the sabbath days so that they may keep sabbath from all work on them’. 2:21 In this way he made a sign on it by which they, too, would keep sabbath with us on the seventh day to eat, drink, and bless the creator of all as he had blessed them and sanctified them for himself as a noteworthy people out of all the nations; and to keep sabbath together with us. 2:22 He made his commands rise as a fine fragrance which is acceptable in his presence for all times.

2:23 There were twenty-two leaders of humanity from Adam until him; and twenty-two kinds of works were made until the seventh day.¹⁴ The latter is blessed and holy and the former, too, is blessed and holy. The one with the other served (the purposes of) holiness and blessing. 2:24 It was granted to these that for all times they should be the blessed and holy ones of¹⁵ the testimony and of the first law,¹⁶ as it

¹² Compare Genesis 2:2, “And on the *seventh* day God finished the work that he had done.”

¹³ 4Q216 is fragmentary but suggests a longer version of this verse, including the phrases “he ceased” and “were made in six days.”

¹⁴ There are also twenty-two letters in the Hebrew alphabet (the language of creation according to *Jub.* 12:26). *Jubilees* corresponds to the Septuagint in counting twenty-two generations before Jacob. The Masoretic text has 21, lacking Cainan between Arphachshad and Shelah (Gen. 10:24; *Jub.* 8:1–5).

¹⁵ 4Q216 indicates a new sentence, rather than a construct, beginning, “This is the testimony and the first law.”

was sanctified and blessed on the seventh day. 2:25 He created the heavens, the earth, and everything that was created in six days. The Lord gave a holy festal day to all his creation. For this reason he gave orders regarding it that anyone who would do any work on it was to die; also, the one who would defile it was to die.

2:26 Now you command the Israelites to observe this day so that they may sanctify it, not do any work on it, and not defile it for it is holier than all (other) days.¹⁷ 2:27 Anyone who profanes it is to die and anyone who does any work on it is to die eternally so that the Israelites may observe this day throughout their history and not be uprooted from the earth. For it is a holy day; it is a blessed day. 2:28 Everyone who observes (it) and keeps sabbath on it from all his work will be holy and blessed throughout all times like us. 2:29 Inform and tell the Israelites the law (which relates to) this day and that they should keep sabbath on it and not neglect it through the error of their minds lest they do (any) work on it—the day) on which it is not proper to do what they wish, namely: to prepare on it anything that is to be eaten or drunk; to draw water; to bring in or remove on it anything which one carries in their gates—(any) work that they had not prepared for themselves in their dwellings on the sixth day. 2:30 They are not to bring (anything) out or in from house to house on this day because it is more holy and more blessed than any of the jubilee of jubilees. On it we kept sabbath in heaven before it was made known to all humanity that on it they should keep sabbath on earth. 2:31 The creator of all blessed but did not sanctify any people(s) and nations to keep sabbath on it except Israel alone. To it alone did he give (the right) to eat, drink, and keep sabbath on it upon the earth. 2:32 The creator of all who created this day blessed it for (the purposes of) blessing, holiness, and glory more than all (other) days. 2:33 This law and testimony were given to the Israelites as an eternal law throughout their history.

The Second Week

Genesis 2:18 Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.” 2:19 So out of the ground the LORD God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its

Jubilees 3:1 On the sixth day of the second week we brought to Adam, on the Lord’s orders, all animals, all cattle, all birds, everything that moves about on the earth, and everything that moves about in the water—in their various kinds and various forms: the animals on the first day; the cattle on the second day; the birds on the third day; everything that moves about on the earth on the fourth day; and the ones that move about in the water on the fifth day. 3:2 Adam named them all, each with its own name.¹⁸

¹⁶ The phrase “first law” also appears in *Jubilees* 6:22, where it seems to refer to the Torah (Genesis-Exodus-Leviticus-Numbers-Deuteronomy) given to Moses already written, in contrast to the dictated testimony of the book of *Jubilees*.

¹⁷ Because 364 is divisible by seven, each date falls on the same day of the week every year in the calendar of *Jubilees*. Consequently, festivals such as the Day of Atonement never conflict with the sabbath, as they do in other calendars.

¹⁸ Compare Genesis 2:19, “So the LORD God *formed out of the ground* various wild animals and various birds of the air, and *he* brought them to the man *to see* what he would call them.” To reconcile the two creation stories *Jubilees* separates forming the animals in the first week, and bringing them to be named in the second week. *Jubilees* maintains the transcendence of God by having angels perform the

name. 2:20 The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner. 2:21 So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. 2:22 And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. 2:23 Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken.” 2:24 Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh. 2:25 And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.

Whatever he called them became their name. 3:3 During these five days Adam was looking at all of these—male and female among every kind that was on the earth. But he himself was alone; there was no one whom he found for himself who would be for him a helper who was like him. 3:4 Then¹⁹ the Lord said to us: ‘It is not good that the man should be alone. Let us make him a helper who is like him’. 3:5 The Lord our God imposed a sound slumber on him and he fell asleep. Then he took one of his bones for a woman. That rib was the origin of the woman—from among his bones. He built up the flesh in its place and built the woman. 3:6 Then he awakened Adam from his sleep. When he awoke, he got up on the sixth day. Then he brought (him) to her. He knew her and said to her: ‘This is now bone from my bone and flesh from my flesh. This one will be called my wife, for she was taken from her husband’. 3:7 For this reason a man and a woman are to become one, and for this reason he leaves his father and his mother. He associates with his wife, and they become one flesh.

3:8 In the first week Adam and his wife—the rib—were created, and in the second week he showed her to him. Therefore, a commandment was given to keep (women) in their defilement seven days for a male (child) and for a female two (units) of seven days. 3:9 After forty days had come to an end for Adam in the land where he had been created, we brought him into the Garden of Eden to work and keep it. His wife was brought (there) on the eightieth day. After this she entered the Garden of Eden. 3:10 For this reason a commandment was written in the heavenly tablets²⁰ for the one who gives birth to a child: if she gives birth to a male, she is to remain in her impurity for seven days like the first seven days; then for thirty-three days she is to remain in the blood of purification. She is not to touch any sacred thing nor to enter the sanctuary until she completes these days for a male. 3:11 As for a female she is to remain in her impurity for two weeks of days like the first two weeks and sixty-six days in the blood of her purification. Their total is eighty days. 3:12 After she had completed these eighty days, we brought her into the Garden of Eden because it is the holiest in the entire earth, and every tree which is planted in it is holy. 3:13 For this reason the law of these days has been ordained for the one who gives birth to a male or a female. She is not to touch any sacred thing nor to enter the sanctuary until the time when those days for a male or a

labor of bringing animals. *Jubilees* maintains the omniscience of God by removing the implication that God needed “to see” what the animals would be called.

¹⁹ Genesis 2:18 has God declare intent to find a partner for the man before creating the animals, which might imply that the animals were failed attempts by God to find a mate for Adam.

²⁰ Otherwise found in Leviticus 12. *Jubilees* explains the origin and observance of the commandment from the beginning of creation, and similarly emphasizes eternity in that the law is to be kept for all times, in the future (*Jub.* 3:14).

female are completed. 3:14 These are the law and testimony that were written for Israel to keep for all times.

The Garden of Eden

3:15 During the first week of the first jubilee Adam and his wife spent the seven years in the Garden of Eden working and guarding it. We gave him work and were teaching him (how) to do everything that was appropriate for working (it).²¹ 3:16 While he was working (it) he was naked but did not realize (it) nor was he ashamed. He would guard the garden against birds, animals, and cattle. He would gather its fruit and eat (it) and would store its surplus for himself and his wife. He would store what was being kept.

3:17 When the conclusion of the seven years which he had completed there arrived—seven years exactly—in the second month, on the seventeenth, the serpent came and approached the woman. The serpent said to the woman: ‘Is it from all the fruit of the trees in the garden (that) the Lord has commanded you: “Do not eat from it?”’ 3:18 She said to him: ‘From all the fruits of the tree(s) which are in the garden the Lord told us: “Eat”. But from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden he told us: “Do not eat from it and do not touch it so that you may not die”’. 3:19 Then the serpent said to the woman: ‘You will not really die because the Lord knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, you will become like gods, and you will know good and evil’. 3:20 The woman saw that the tree was delightful and pleasing to the eye and (that) its fruit was good to eat. So she took some of it and ate (it). 3:21 She first covered her shame with fig leaves and then gave it to Adam. He ate (it), his eyes were opened, and he saw that he was naked. 3:22 He took fig leaves and sewed (them); (thus) he made himself an apron and covered his shame.

3:23 The Lord cursed the serpent and was angry at it forever. At the woman, too, he was angry because she had listened to the serpent and eaten. He said to her: 3:24 ‘I will indeed multiply your sadness and your pain. Bear children in sadness. Your place of refuge will be with your husband; he will rule over you’. 3:25 Then he said to Adam: ‘Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree from which I commanded you not to eat, may the ground be cursed on account of you. May it grow thorns and thistles for you. Eat your food in the sweat of your face until you return to the earth from which you were taken. For earth you are and to earth you will return’.

Genesis 3:20 The man named his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all living. 3:21 And the LORD God made garments of

3:26 He made clothing out of skins for them, clothed them, and dismissed them from the Garden of Eden.

3:27 On that day, as he was leaving the Garden of Eden, he burned incense²² as a pleasing fragrance—frankincense, galbanum, stacte, and aromatic spices—in the early morning when the sun rose at

²¹ *Jubilees* uses the word “work” four times in this sentence and the next, where Genesis has only “guard.” Genesis seems to imply that work was not part of the original plan of creation, but the consequence of sin. *Jubilees* may be like other texts in suggesting a “back to Eden” eschatology, but describes Eden as a time when Jewish institutions (such as law, temple and priesthood) and daily life (labor and purity) were already established. Consequently, there would be no eschatological reform of Jewish institutions.

²² *Jubilees* conceives of Eden as a sanctuary and Adam as a priest.

skins for the man and for his wife, and clothed them.

3:22 Then the LORD God said, “See, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever” — 3:23 therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken. 3:24 He drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a sword flaming and turning to guard the way to the tree of life.

the time when he covered his shame.

3:28 On that day the mouths of all the animals, the cattle, the birds, everything that walks and everything that moves about were made incapable of speaking because all of them used to converse with one another in one language and one tongue.²³ 3:29 He dismissed from the Garden of Eden all the animate beings that were in the Garden of Eden. All animate beings were dispersed—each by its kind and each by its nature—into the place(s) which had been created for them.

3:30 But of all the animals and cattle he permitted Adam alone to cover his shame. 3:31 For this reason it has been commanded in the tablets regarding all those who know the judgment of the law that they cover their shame and not uncover themselves as the nations uncover themselves.²⁴

3:32 At the beginning of the fourth month Adam and his wife departed from the Garden of Eden. They lived in the land of Elda, in the land where they were created. 3:33 Adam named his wife Eve. 3:34 They were childless throughout the first jubilee; afterwards he knew her. 3:35 He himself was working the land as he had been taught in the Garden of Eden.

The Second Generation

Genesis 4:1 Now the man knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, “I have produced a man with the help of the LORD.” 4:2 Next she bore his brother Abel.

Jubilees 4:1 In the third week in the second jubilee [years 64–70],²⁵ she gave birth to Cain; in the fourth [71–77] she gave birth to Abel; and in the fifth [78–84] she gave birth to his daughter Awan.

4:2 During the first (week) of the third jubilee [ninety–nine to 105] Cain killed Abel because we had accepted his sacrifice from him but from Cain we had not accepted (one). 4:3 When he killed him in a field, his blood cried out from the ground to heaven—crying because he had been killed. 4:4 The Lord blamed Cain regarding Abel because he had killed him. While he allowed him a length (of time) on the earth because of his brother’s blood, he cursed him upon the earth.

4:5 For this reason it has been written on the heavenly tablets: ‘Cursed is the person who beats his companion maliciously’. All who saw (it) said: ‘Let him be (cursed). And let the man who has seen but has not told be cursed like him’. 4:6 For this reason we report, when we come before the Lord our God, all the sins which take place in heaven and on earth—what (happens) in the light, in the darkness, or in any place.

²³ Genesis gives no explanation of the talking serpent or how animals ceased to talk.

²⁴ According to 1 Maccabees 1:14, those who promoted Hellenistic assimilation built a gymnasium in Jerusalem to promote the Greek practice of exercise and athletic competition in the nude (the origin of the word “gymnasium”).

²⁵ A jubilee period is forty-nine years; a week of years is seven years.

4:7 Adam and his wife spent four weeks of years mourning for Abel. Then in the fourth year of the fifth week [130] they became happy. Adam again knew his wife, and she gave birth to a son for him. He named him Seth because he said: ‘The Lord has raised up for us another offspring on the earth in place of Abel’ (for Cain had killed him). 4:8 In the sixth week [134–40] he became the father of his daughter Azura. 4:9 Cain married his sister Awan, and at the end of the fourth jubilee [148–96] she gave birth to Enoch for him. In the first year of the first week of the fifth jubilee [197] houses were built on the earth. Then Cain built a city and named it after his son Enoch. 4:10 Adam knew his wife Eve, and she gave birth to nine more children. 4:11 In the fifth week of the fifth jubilee [225–31] Seth married his sister Azura,²⁶ and in its fourth (year) [228] she gave birth to Enosh for him. 4:12 He was the first to call on the Lord’s name on the earth. 4:13 In the seventh jubilee, in the third week [309–15] Enosh married his sister Noam. She gave birth to a son for him in the third year of the fifth week [325], and he named him Kenan. 4:14 At the end of the eighth jubilee [344–92] Kenan married his sister Mualelit. She gave birth to a son for him in the ninth jubilee, in the first week—in the third year of this week [395]—and he named him Malalael.

Enoch

4:15 During the second week of the tenth jubilee [449–55] Malalael married Dinah, the daughter of Barakiel, the daughter of his father’s brother. She gave birth to a son for him in the third week, in its sixth year [461]. He named him Jared because during his lifetime the angels of the Lord who were called Watchers descended to earth to teach humankind and to do what is just and upright upon the earth.²⁷ 4:16 In the eleventh jubilee [491–539] Jared took a wife for himself, and her name was Barakah, the daughter of Rasu’eyal, the daughter of his father’s brother, in the fourth week of this jubilee [512–18]. She gave birth to a son for him during the fifth week, in the fourth year, of the jubilee [522], and he named him Enoch. 4:17 He was the first of humankind who were born on the earth who learned (the art of) writing, instruction, and wisdom and who wrote down in a book the signs of the sky in accord with the fixed patterns of their months so that humankind would know the seasons of the years according to the fixed patterns of each of their months. 4:18 He was the first to write a testimony. He testified to humankind in the generations of the earth: The weeks of the jubilees he related, and made known the days of the years; the months he arranged, and related the sabbaths of the years, as we had told him. 4:19 While he slept he saw in a vision what has happened and what will occur—how things will happen for humankind during their history until the day of judgment. He saw everything and understood. He wrote a testimony for himself and placed it upon the earth against all humankind and for their history.²⁸

²⁶ *Jubilees* pays extra attention to the name and lineage of wives, principally to emphasize endogamy and to illustrate a correlation between exogamy and disaster.

²⁷ The *Book of the Watchers* lacks any notion that the angels originally had a good mission before their rebellion (1 Enoch 6). *Jubilees* does not introduce the sin until *Jub.* 5:1.

²⁸ The description of Enoch depends on several parts of *1 Enoch*, including the *Book of the Watchers*, the *Astronomical Book*, and some form of the *Book of Dreams*. There is special emphasis on Enoch’s role in God’s perfect justice. Enoch warns of sin and punishment in advance so that sinners can be held fully accountable.

4:20 During the twelfth jubilee, in its seventh week [582–88] he took a wife for himself. Her name was Edni, the daughter of Daniel, the daughter of his father’s brother. In the sixth year of this week [587] she gave birth to a son for him, and he named him Methuselah.

4:21 He was, moreover, with God’s angels for six jubilees of years. They showed him everything on earth and in the heavens—the dominion of the sun²⁹—and he wrote down everything. 4:22 He testified to the Watchers who had sinned with the daughters of men because these had begun to mix with earthly women so that they became defiled. Enoch testified against all of them.

4:23 He was taken from human society, and we led him into the Garden of Eden for (his) greatness and honor. Now he is there writing down the judgment and condemnation of the world and all the wickedness of humankind. 4:24 Because of him the flood water did not come on any of the land of Eden because he was placed there as a sign and to testify against all people in order to tell all the deeds of history until the day of judgment. 4:25 He burned the evening incense of the sanctuary which is acceptable before the Lord on the mountain of incense. 4:26 For there are four places on earth that belong to the Lord: the Garden of Eden, the mountain of the east, this mountain on which you are today—Mt. Sinai—and Mt. Zion (which) will be sanctified in the new creation for the sanctification of the whole earth. For this reason the earth will be sanctified from all its sins and from its uncleanness into the history of eternity.

Noah

4:27 During this jubilee—that is, the fourteenth jubilee—Methuselah married Edna, the daughter of Ezrael, the daughter of his father’s brother, in the third week in the first year of that week [652]. He became the father of a son whom he named Lamech. 4:28 In the fifteenth jubilee, in the third week [701–707], Lamech married a woman whose name was Betanosh, the daughter of Barakiel, the daughter of his father’s brother. During this week she gave birth to a son for him, and he named him Noah, explaining: ‘(He is one) who will give me consolation from my sadness, from all my work, and from the earth the Lord cursed’.

Genesis 2:17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.

Genesis 5:5 Thus all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred thirty years; and he died.

Psalms 90:4 For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past, or like a watch in the night.

Jubilees 4:29 At the end of the nineteenth jubilee, during the seventh week—in its sixth year [930]—Adam died. All his children buried him in the land where he had been created. He was the first to be buried in the ground. 4:30 He lacked 70 years from 1000 years because 1000 years are one day in the testimony of heaven.³⁰ For this reason it was written regarding the tree of knowledge: ‘On the day that you eat from it you will die’. Therefore he did not complete the years of this day because he died during it.

²⁹ The *Astronomical Book* describes the movement of the moon as well, but *Jubilees* rejects any consideration of lunar patterns. See also *Jub.* 2:9; 6:36.

³⁰ Psalm 90:4, “For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past, or like a watch in the night.”

Genesis 4:15 Then the LORD said to him, “Not so! Whoever kills Cain will suffer a sevenfold vengeance.” And the LORD put a mark on Cain, so that no one who came upon him would kill him.

Leviticus 24:21 One who kills a human being shall be put to death.

4:31 At the conclusion of this jubilee Cain was killed one year after him. His house fell on him, and he died inside his house. He was killed by its stones for with a stone he had killed Abel and, by a just punishment, he was killed with a stone.³¹

4:32 For this reason it has been ordained on the heavenly tablets: ‘By the instrument with which a man kills his fellow he is to be killed. As he wounded him so are they to do to him’.

4:33 In the twenty-fifth jubilee Noah married a woman whose name was Emzara, the daughter of Rakiel, the daughter of his father’s brother—during the first year in the fifth week [1205]. In its third year [1207] she gave birth to Shem for him; in its fifth year [1209] she gave birth to Ham for him; and in the first year during the sixth week [1212] she gave birth to Japheth for him.

Perfect Justice

Genesis 6:1 When people began to multiply on the face of the ground, and daughters were born to them, 6:2 the sons of God saw that they were fair; and they took wives for themselves of all that they chose. 6:3 Then the LORD said, “My spirit shall not abide in mortals forever, for they are flesh; their days shall be one hundred twenty years.” 6:4 The Nephilim were on the earth in those days—and also afterward—when the sons of God went in to the daughters of humans, who bore children to them. These were the heroes that were of old, warriors of renown.

6:5 The LORD saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually. 6:6 And the LORD was sorry that he had made humankind on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. 6:7 So the LORD said, “I will blot out from the earth the human beings I have created—people together with animals and creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.”

5:3 The Lord saw that the earth was corrupt, (that) all animate beings had corrupted their prescribed course, and (that) all of them—everyone that was on the earth—had acted wickedly before his eyes. 5:4 He said that he would obliterate people and all animate beings that were on the surface of the earth which he had created. 5:5 He was pleased with Noah alone.

Jubilees 5:1 When mankind began to multiply on the surface of the entire earth and daughters were born to them, the angels of the Lord—in a certain (year) of this jubilee—saw that they were beautiful to look at. So they married of them whomever they chose. They gave birth to children for them and they were giants.

5:2 Wickedness increased on the earth. All animate beings corrupted their way—(everyone of them) from people to cattle, animals, birds, and everything that moves about on the ground. All of them corrupted their way and their prescribed course. They began to devour one another, and wickedness increased on the earth. Every thought of all mankind’s knowledge was evil like this all the time.

³¹ Cain’s death is not mentioned in Genesis. There the punishment for his crime seems to be protection from death, rather than death, which is God’s standard of justice prescribed elsewhere (Ex. 21:24; Lev. 24:19).

5:6 Against his angels whom he had sent to the earth he was angry enough to uproot them from all their (positions of) authority. He told us to tie them up in the depths of the earth; now they are tied within them and are alone. 5:7 Regarding their children there went out from his presence an order to strike them with the sword and to remove them from beneath the sky. 5:8 He said: ‘My spirit will not remain on people forever for they are flesh. Their lifespan is to be 120 years’. 5:9 He sent his sword among them so that they would kill one another. They began to kill each other until all of them fell by the sword and were obliterated from the earth. 5:10 Now their fathers were watching, but afterwards they were tied up in the depths of the earth until the great day of judgment when there will be condemnation on all who have corrupted their ways and their actions before the Lord. 5:11 He obliterated all from their places; there remained no one of them whom he did not judge for all their wickedness. 5:12 He made a new and righteous nature for all his creatures so that they would not sin with their whole nature until eternity. Everyone will be righteous—each according to his kind—for all time.

5:13 The judgment of them all has been ordained and written on the heavenly tablets; there is no injustice.³² (As for) all who transgress from their way in which it was ordained for them to go—if they do not go in it, judgment has been written down for each creature and for each kind. 5:14 There is nothing which is in heaven or on the earth, in the light, the darkness, Sheol, the deep, or in the dark place—all their judgments have been ordained, written, and inscribed. 5:15 He will exercise judgment regarding each person—the great one in accord with his greatness and the small one in accord with his smallness—each one in accord with his way. 5:16 He is not one who shows favoritism or one who takes a bribe, if he says he will execute judgment against each person. If a person gave everything on earth he would not show favoritism nor would he accept (it) from him because he is the righteous judge.

5:17 Regarding the Israelites it has been written and ordained: ‘If they turn to him in the right way, he will forgive all their wickedness and will pardon all their sins’. 5:18 It has been written and ordained that he will have mercy on all who turn from all their errors once each year.³³ 5:19 To all who corrupted their ways and their plan(s) before the flood no favor was shown except to Noah alone because favor was shown to him for the sake of his children whom he saved from the flood waters for his sake because his mind was righteous in all his ways, as it had been commanded concerning him. He did not transgress from anything that had been ordained for him.

The Chronology of the Flood

5:20 The Lord said that he would obliterate everything on the land—from the people to cattle, animals, birds, and whatever moves about on the ground. 5:21 He ordered Noah to make himself an ark in order to save himself from the flood waters. 5:22 Noah made an ark in every respect as he had ordered him during the twenty-seventh jubilee of years, in the fifth week, during its fifth year [1307].³⁴ 5:23 He entered (it) during its sixth (year) [1308], in the second month—on the first of the second month until the

³² *Jubilees* adapts the basic story of the *Book of the Watchers* from an explanation of the origin of evil, to an example of perfect justice.

³³ The Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), described especially in Leviticus 16.

³⁴ *Jubilees* matches the date of the flood found in the Samaritan Pentateuch.

sixteenth. He and all that we brought to him entered the ark. The Lord closed it from outside on the seventeenth in the evening.

5:24 The Lord opened the seven floodgates of heaven and the openings of the sources of the great deep—there being seven openings in number. 5:25 The floodgates began to send water down from the sky for forty days and forty nights, while the sources of the deep brought waters up until the whole earth was full of water. 5:26 The waters increased on the earth; the waters rose fifteen cubits above every high mountain. The ark rose above the earth and moved about on the surface of the waters. 5:27 The waters remained standing on the surface of the earth for five months—150 days. 5:28 Then the ark came to rest on the summit of Lubar, one of the mountains of Ararat. 5:29 During the fourth month the sources of the great deep were closed, and floodgates of heaven were held back. On the first of the seventh month all the sources of the earth's deep places were opened, and the waters started to go down into the deep below. 5:30 On the first of the tenth month the summits of the mountains became visible, and on the first of the first month the earth became visible. 5:31 The waters dried up from above the earth in the fifth week, in its seventh year [1309]. On the seventeenth day of the second month the earth was dry. 5:32 On its twenty-seventh (day) he opened the ark and sent from it the animals, birds, and whatever moves about.

The First Earthly Institution of the Festival of the Oath and Covenant

6:1 On the first of the third month he left the ark and built an altar on this mountain. 6:2 He appeared on the earth,³⁵ took a kid and atoned with its blood for all the sins of the earth because everything that was on it had been obliterated except those who were in the ark with Noah. 6:3 He placed the fat on the altar. Then he took a bull, a ram, a sheep, goats, salt, a turtledove, and a dove and offered (them as) a burnt offering on the altar. He poured on them an offering mixed with oil, sprinkled wine, and put frankincense on everything. He sent up a pleasant fragrance that was pleasing before the Lord. 6:4 The Lord smelled the pleasant fragrance and made a covenant with him that there would be no flood waters which would destroy the earth; (that) throughout all the days of the earth seedtime and harvest would not cease; (that) cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night would not change their prescribed pattern and would never cease.

Genesis 9:1 God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. 9:2 The fear and dread of you shall rest on every animal of the earth, and on every bird of the air, on everything that creeps on the ground, and on all the fish of the sea; into your hand they are delivered. 9:3 Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; and just as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. 9:4 Only, you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. 9:5 Also your blood with your vital forces will be required. From the hand of every animal I will require it as from the hand of the human. From the hand

Jubilees 6:5 Now you increase and multiply yourselves on the earth and become numerous upon it. Become a blessing within it. I will put fear of you and dread of you on everything that is on the earth and in the sea. 6:6 I have now given you all the animals, all the cattle, everything that flies, everything that moves about on the earth, the fish in the waters, and everything for food. Like the green herbs I have given you everything to eat. 6:7 But you are not to eat animate beings with their spirit—with the blood—(because

³⁵ Or, “He made atonement for the earth.”

of each one I will require the vital force of his fellow man. 9:6 Whoever sheds the blood of a human, by a human shall that person's blood be shed; for in his own image God made humankind. 9:7 And you, be fruitful and multiply, abound on the earth and multiply in it."

9:8 Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, 9:9 "As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, 9:10 and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. 9:11 I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." 9:12 God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: 9:13 I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. 9:14 When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, 9:15 I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. 9:16 When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." 9:17 God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth."

the vital force of all animate beings is in the blood) lest your blood with your vital forces be required from the hand of any man. From the hand of each one I will require the blood of man. 6:8 The person who sheds the blood of man will have his blood shed by man because he made mankind in the image of the Lord. 6:9 As for you—increase and become numerous on the earth.

6:10 Noah and his sons swore an oath not to consume any blood that was in any animate being. During this month he made a covenant before the Lord God forever throughout all the history of the earth.³⁶ 6:11 For this reason he told you, too, to make a covenant—accompanied by an oath³⁷—with the Israelites during this month on the mountain and to sprinkle blood on them because of all the words of the covenant which the Lord was making with them for all times. 6:12 This testimony has been written regarding you to keep it for all times so that you may not at any time eat any blood of animals or birds throughout all the days of the earth. (As for) the person who has eaten the blood of an animal, of cattle, or of birds during all the days of the earth—he and his descendants will be uprooted from the earth.

6:13 Now you command the Israelites not to eat any blood so that their name and their descendants may continue to exist before the Lord our God for all time. 6:14 This law has no temporal limits because it is forever. They are to keep it throughout history so that they may continue supplicating

³⁶ Cf. Acts 15:19–21, "Therefore I have reached the decision that we should not trouble those Gentiles who are turning to God, ²⁰ but we should write to them to abstain only from things polluted by idols and from fornication and from whatever has been strangled and from blood. ²¹ For in every city, for generations past, Moses has had those who proclaim him, for he has been read aloud every sabbath in the synagogues."

³⁷ The Hebrew words for "oaths" and "weeks" are similar in pronunciation and identical in writing. *Jubilees* places emphasis on the festival or weeks/oaths as the time for the renewal of the same basic covenant sealed on that day (third month, fifteenth day) by Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Israel at Sinai.

for themselves with blood in front of the altar each and every day. In the morning and in the evening they are continually to ask pardon for themselves before the Lord so that they may keep it and not be uprooted.

6:15 He gave Noah and his sons a sign that there would not again be a flood on the earth. 6:16 He put his bow in the clouds as a sign of the eternal covenant that there would not henceforth be flood waters on the earth for the purpose of destroying it throughout all the days of the earth. 6:17 For this reason it has been ordained and written on the heavenly tablets that they should celebrate the festival of weeks during this month—once a year—to renew the covenant each and every year. 6:18 This entire festival had been celebrated in heaven from the time of creation until the lifetime of Noah—for twenty-six jubilees and five weeks of years [=1309]. Then Noah and his sons kept it for seven jubilees and one week of years until Noah's death [=350 years]. From the day of Noah's death his sons corrupted (it) until Abraham's lifetime and were eating blood. 6:19 Abraham alone kept (it), and his sons Isaac and Jacob kept it until your lifetime. During your lifetime the Israelites had forgotten (it) until I renewed (it) for them at this mountain.

6:20 Now you command the Israelites to keep this festival during all their generations as a commandment for them: one day in the year, during this month, they are to celebrate the festival. 6:21 because it is the festival of weeks and it is the festival of first fruits. This festival is twofold and of two kinds. Celebrate it as it is written and inscribed regarding it. 6:22 For I have written (this) in the book of the first law in which I wrote for you³⁸ that you should celebrate it at each of its times one day in a year. I have told you about its sacrifice so that the Israelites may continue to remember and celebrate it throughout their generations during this month—one day each year.

The Calendar of the Seasonal Festivals

6:23 On the first of the first month, the first of the fourth month, the first of the seventh month, and the first of the tenth month are memorial days and days of the seasons. They are written down and ordained at the four divisions of the year as an eternal testimony. 6:24 Noah ordained them as festivals for himself throughout the history of eternity with the result that through them he had a reminder. 6:25 On the first of the first month he was told to make the ark, and on it the earth became dry, he opened (it), and saw the earth. 6:26 On the first of the fourth month the openings of the depths of the abyss below were closed. On the first of the seventh month all the openings of the earth's depths were opened, and the water began to go down into them. 6:27 On the first of the tenth month the summits of the mountains became visible, and Noah was very happy.

6:28 For this reason he ordained them for himself forever as memorial festivals. So they are ordained, 6:29 and they enter them on the heavenly tablets. Each one of them (consists of) thirteen weeks; their memorial (extends) from one to the other: from the first to the second, from the second to third, and from the third to the fourth. 6:30 All the days of the commandments will be fifty-two weeks of days; (they will make) the entire year complete. 6:31 So it has been engraved and ordained on the heavenly tablets. One is not allowed to transgress a single year, year by year.

³⁸ Most scholars understand this to refer to the Pentateuch, which is distinguished from the book of *Jubilees* (implicitly a second law, or testimony of the law) in that the first was given already written, and the second dictated for Moses to write down.

6:32 Now you command the Israelites to keep the years in this number—364 days. Then the year will be complete and it will not disturb its time from its days or from its festivals because everything will happen in harmony with their testimony. They will neither omit a day nor disturb a festival. 6:33 If they transgress and do not celebrate them in accord with his command, then all of them will disturb their times. The years will be moved from this; they will disturb the times and the years will be moved. They will transgress their prescribed pattern. 6:34 All the Israelites will forget and will not find the way of the years. They will forget the first of the month, the season, and the sabbath; they will err with respect to the entire prescribed pattern of the years. 6:35 For I know and from now on will inform you—not from my own mind because this is the way the book is written in front of me, and the divisions of times are ordained on the heavenly tablets, lest they forget the covenantal festivals and walk in the festivals of the nations,³⁹ after their error and after their ignorance. 6:36 There will be people who carefully observe the moon with lunar observations because it is corrupt (with respect to) the seasons and is early from year to year by ten days.⁴⁰ 6:37 Therefore years will come about for them when they will disturb (the year) and make a day of testimony something worthless and a profane day a festival. Everyone will join together both holy days with the profane and the profane day with the holy day, for they will err regarding the months, the sabbaths, the festivals, and the jubilee.

6:38 For this reason I am commanding you and testifying to you so that you may testify to them because after your death your children will disturb (it) so that they do not make the year (consist of) 364 days only. Therefore, they will err regarding the first of the month, the season, the sabbath, and the festivals. They will eat all the blood with all (kinds of) meat.

Select Passages from the Rest of the Book

Distribution of territories and the curse of the Canaanites (*Jub. 8–9*)

Jubilees 8–9 establishes at length the division of the territories of the earth among Noah's descendents. There is strong emphasis on the legitimacy and permanence of the territorial division, with the consent of an angel, Noah, and all parties. The agreement is sealed with an oath promising destruction for all parties that violate the oath. The details are certainly interesting in that they reflect the geographical knowledge available to the author, but the principal point is to establish that the land of Canaan never really belonged to the Canaanites. It was called Canaan because the Canaanites stole it from the family that includes the Israelites.

³⁹ This point stands out in that it seems to address participating in gentile festivals, as some Jews embraced and others were forced to do during the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes. The primary concern is with those who celebrate the Jewish festivals, but at the improper time. Because of the importance of synchronizing with the festival observance in heaven, the proper timing is essential. Peshar Habakkuk implies that the Teacher of Righteousness and the Wicked Priest celebrated the Day of Atonement at different times.

⁴⁰ A lunar calendar has 354 days. A luni-solar calendar has a leap-month every few years to keep the months correlated with seasons. Luni-solar calendars were used by the Seleucids, Hasmoneans, and Rabbis.

[Canaan's father and brothers warn him:] 10:31 Do not settle in Shem's residence because it emerged by their lot for Shem and his sons.

10:32 You are cursed and will be cursed more than all of Noah's children through the curse by which we obligated ourselves with an oath before the holy judge and before your father Noah'. 10:33 But he did not listen to them. He settled in the land of Lebanon—from Hamath to the entrance of Egypt—he and his sons until the present. 10:34 For this reason that land was named the land of Canaan.

Consequently, the land was not taken from the Canaanites and given to the Israelites, it was taken back by the Israelites. The slaughter of the Canaanites is the fulfillment of the punishment prescribed by the oath taken by their own ancestors. This detail also fits the larger structure of the book of *Jubilees*, which sees the exodus and conquest as the fulfillment of the release and return prescribed in Leviticus 25, only in the fiftieth jubilee of creation rather than the fiftieth year (see below on *Jub.* 50).

Noah and the demons (*Jub.* 10)

Jubilees 10 presumes the basic idea of the demons known from the *Book of the Watchers*, and significantly recasts their significance. In both, the demons are the spirits of the giants which survive after their bodies die, since they are half human and half (rebel) angel. In both, the demons are wicked and cause suffering. In the *Book of the Watchers* the demons are part of the spread of injustice and affliction of the righteous.

1 Enoch 15:7 The spirits of heaven, in heaven is their dwelling;
15:8 but now the giants who were begotten by the spirits and flesh—they will call them evil spirits on the earth, for their dwelling will be on the earth. 15:9 The spirits that have gone forth from the body of their flesh are evil spirits, for from humans they came into being, and from the holy watchers was the origin of their creation. Evil spirits they will be on the earth, and evil spirits they will be called. 15:10 The spirits of heaven, in heaven is their dwelling; but the spirits begotten on earth, on the earth is their dwelling.

15:11 And the spirits of the giants lead astray, do violence, make desolate, and attack and wrestle and hurl upon the earth can cause illnesses. They eat nothing, but abstain from food and are thirsty and smite. 15:12 These spirits will rise up against the sons of men and against the women, for they have come forth from them. 16:1 From the day of the slaughter and destruction and death of the giants, from the soul of whose flesh the spirits are proceeding, they are making desolate without judgment. Thus they will make desolate until the day of the consummation of the great judgment, when the great age will be consummated. It will be consummated all at once.

Jubilees adapts the demons into a system of perfect justice, in which they serve to punish the wicked, but have no power over the righteous. When the demons begin to afflict Noah's grandchildren, Noah simply asks God that they be removed.

***Jubilees* 10:1** During the third week of this jubilee [1583–89] impure demons began to mislead Noah's grandchildren, to make them act

foolishly, and to destroy them. 10:2 Then Noah's sons came to their father Noah and told him about the demons who were misleading, blinding, and killing his grandchildren. 10:3 He prayed before the Lord his God and said: 'God of the spirits which are in all animate beings—you who have shown kindness to me, saved me and my sons from the flood waters, and did not make me perish as you did to the people (meant for) destruction—because your mercy for me has been large and your kindness to me has been great: may your mercy be lifted over the children of your children; and may the wicked spirits not rule them in order to destroy them from the earth. 10:4 Now you bless me and my children so that we may increase, become numerous, and fill the earth. 10:5 You know how your Watchers, the fathers of these spirits, have acted during my lifetime. As for these spirits who have remained alive, imprison them and hold them captive in the place of judgment. May they not cause destruction among your servant's sons, my God, for they are savage and were created for the purpose of destroying. 10:6 "May they not rule the spirits of the living for you alone know their punishment; and may they not have power over the sons of the righteous from now and forevermore." 10:7 Then our God told us to tie up each one. 10:8 When Mastema, the leader of the spirits, came, he said: "Lord creator, leave some of them before me; let them listen to me and do everything that I tell them, because if none of them is left for me I shall not be able to exercise the authority of my will among humankind. For they are meant for (the purposes of) destroying and misleading before my punishment because the evil of humankind is great." 10:9 Then he said that a tenth of them should be left before him, while he would make nine parts descend to the place of judgment. 10:10 He told one of us that we should teach Noah all their medicines because he knew that they would neither conduct themselves properly nor fight fairly. 10:11 We acted in accord with his entire command. All of the evil ones who were savage we tied up in the place of judgment, while we left a tenth of them to exercise power on the earth before Mastema.⁴¹ 10:12 We told Noah all the medicines for their diseases with their deceptions so that he could cure (them) by means of the earth's plants. 10:13 Noah wrote down in a book everything (just) as we had taught him regarding all the kinds of medicine, and the evil spirits were precluded from pursuing Noah's children. 10:14 He gave all the books that he had written to his oldest son Shem because he loved him much more than all his sons.

Only in *Jubilees* is there any suggestion of a 90 percent reduction of demons. More significantly, they function with divine consent for the particular purpose of punishing wickedness. As Noah requests, they have no power over the righteous. If they do violate their just mandate, they can still be defeated by anyone who studies the ancestral books, which later end up in the hands of the Levites to be taught to all Israel (*Jub.* 45:16). The demons are particularly associated with the other nations, and explain whatever

⁴¹ One medieval Hebrew fragment reads "Mastema" where the Ethiopic tradition reads "the satan."

(destructive) power is seen in idolatry. They punish Israelites who wander into idolatry from the safe haven of divine protection (*Jub.* 15:31–32). Demons remain a threat to Israelites in as much as assimilation is a concern, but *Jubilees* recasts them into a system of perfect divine justice and an unimpeded relationship between God and Israel.

Circumcision (*Jub.* 15)

The treatment of circumcision in *Jubilees* 15 illustrates a number of tendencies. The events are drawn from Genesis 17, but the legal implications are expanded. The practice of Abraham is more than a custom; it is an absolute commandment and a non-negotiable marker of male Jewish identity. It is eternal going forward, but also backwards to the first week of creation, when the angels corresponding to Israel were made circumcised, and Israel was elected to be like them.

15:25 This law is (valid) for all history forever. There is no circumcising of days,⁴² nor omitting any day of the eight days because it is an eternal ordinance ordained and written on the heavenly tablets. 15:26 Anyone who is born, the flesh of whose private parts has not been circumcised by the eighth day does not belong to the people of the pact which the Lord made with Abraham but to the people (meant for) destruction. Moreover, there is no sign on him that he belongs to the Lord, but (he is meant) for destruction, for being destroyed from the earth, and for being uprooted from the earth because he has violated the covenant of the Lord our God. 15:27 For this is what the nature of all the angels of the presence and all the angels of holiness was like from the day of their creation. In front of the angels of the presence and the angels of holiness he sanctified Israel to be with him and his holy angels.

Also in typical fashion, the event is dated to the middle of the third month, the festival of oaths/weeks on which the eternal covenant is renewed (*Jub.* 15:1).

Jubilees reflects concern with Hellenistic assimilation, probably the movement described in 1 Maccabees 1 as foregoing circumcision in order to join with the surrounding nations.

15:33 I am now telling you that the Israelites will prove false to this ordinance. They will not circumcise their sons in accord with this entire law because they will leave some of the flesh of their circumcision when they circumcise their sons. All the people of Belial will leave their sons uncircumcised just as they were born.

The phrase here translated “people of Belial” is translated in the Septuagint (2 Chron 13:7) with the same phrase used to describe the renegades in 1 Maccabees 1:11. In addition to polemics against those who forego circumcision entirely, scholars have also found here an argument with Jews who do practice circumcision, but are more flexible in moving it to another day under extenuating circumstances (sabbath or illness). The Mishnah holds the more lenient position. This is one of many legal positions in *Jubilees* that were not widely held in the long term (see also the prohibitions of sex and fighting on the sabbath in *Jub.* 50:8, 12). In light of the emphasis on Jewish unity in the rest of the book, it seems unlikely that the author of *Jubilees* would have considered someone circumcised on the ninth day to be permanently

⁴² There is a pun here in Hebrew. “Circumcising of days” and “completion of days” sound similar.

excluded from the Jewish community. It is possible that *Jubilees* rejects converts who became circumcised as adults. In any case, circumcision is held up as the requisite marker of male Israelites for purposes of divine protection and mercy.

The issue of circumcision is the occasion for the most theological statement on the difference between Jews and gentiles.

15:28 Now you command the Israelites to keep the sign of this covenant throughout their history as an eternal ordinance so that they may not be uprooted from the earth 15:29 because the command has been ordained as a covenant so that they should keep it forever on all the Israelites.

15:30 For the Lord did not draw near to himself either Ishmael, his sons, his brothers, or Esau. He did not choose them (simply) because they were among Abraham's children, for he knew them. But he chose Israel to be his people. 15:31 He sanctified them and gathered (them) from all humankind. For there are many nations and many peoples and all belong to him. He made spirits rule over all in order to lead them astray from following him. 15:32 But over Israel he made no angel or spirit rule because he alone is their ruler. He will guard them and require them for himself from his angels, his spirits, and everyone, and all his powers so that he may guard them and bless them and so that they may be his and he theirs from now and forever.

The idea of angelic princes of nations is upheld, but limited to other nations. The relationship between God and Israel is never mediated. The spirits who rule over gentiles and lead them away from following God are the spirits of nature created on the first day (*Jub.* 2:2). This would explain why gentiles worship nature rather than the creator. It would also imply that God does not want to be worshipped by nations besides Israel.

Jacob's blessings (*Jub.* 19–22)

If the book of *Jubilees* has one central hero it is Jacob. If Genesis leaves any room for seeing Jacob's election as the result of chance or trickery, or Jacob's character as less than perfect at all times, *Jubilees* more than compensates. The election of Jacob is first emphasized in the first week of creation, twenty-two generations before Jacob is even born. Once Jacob is born, Abraham is the first to recognize and amplify the blessings of Jacob. Abraham's blessings go on at great length, even after the narrator declares the blessings concluded (*Jub.* 22:25–30). An excerpt gives a sense of the whole.

22:10 He summoned Jacob and said to him: 'My son Jacob, may the God of all bless and strengthen you to do before him what is right and what he wants. May he choose you and your descendants to be his people for his heritage in accord with his will throughout all time. Now you, my son Jacob, come close and kiss me'. 22:11 So he came close and kissed him. Then he said: 'May my son Jacob and all his sons be blessed to the most high Lord throughout all ages. May the Lord give you righteous descendants, and may he sanctify some of your sons⁴³ within the entire earth. May the nations serve you, and may all the nations bow before

⁴³ See below on the elevation of Levi.

your descendants. 22:12 Be strong before people and continue to exercise power among all of Seth's descendants. Then your ways and the ways of your sons will be proper so that they may be a holy people. 22:13 May the most high God give you all the blessings with which he blessed me and with which he blessed Noah and Adam. May they come to rest on the sacred head of your descendants throughout each and every generation and forever. 22:14 May he purify you from all filthy pollution so that you may be pardoned for all the guilt of your sins of ignorance. May he strengthen and bless you; may you possess the entire earth. 22:15 May he renew his covenant with you so that you may be for him the people of his heritage throughout all ages. May he truly and rightly be God for you and your descendants throughout all the time of the earth.

Abraham's blessing is reinforced by Rebecca, a spirit of prophecy, divine intervention, and Isaac once he comes to his senses. Even Esau recognizes Jacob's merit.

The Jubilees "apocalypse" (Jub. 23)

Jubilees 23 begins with the death of Abraham, and extends the discourse to address the correlation between longevity and righteousness. Although Abraham individually was more righteous than other ancestors who lived longer, he lived a mere 175 years because of the wickedness of the world around him.

23:9 For the times of the ancients were nineteen jubilees for their lifetimes. After the flood they started to decrease from nineteen jubilees, to be fewer with respect to jubilees, to age quickly, and to have their times be completed in view of the numerous difficulties and through the wickedness of their ways—with the exception of Abraham. 23:10 For Abraham was perfect with the Lord in everything that he did—being properly pleasing throughout all his lifetime. And yet (even) he had not completed four jubilees during his lifetime when he became old—in view of wickedness—and reached the end of his time.

From there *Jubilees* "predicts" that lifetimes will continue to decrease to a mere seventy to eighty years and worse before Israel turns to the proper study of the laws. At that point Israel will live in purity and longevity will gradually return to a thousand years.

The outer framework of the book as a whole is technically that of an apocalypse, but this chapter in particular has been called the *Jubilees* "apocalypse" because it concentrates literary features typical of the historical apocalypses. It "predicts" history up to and beyond the actual time of composition. It describes a decline of history culminating in "final woes." It describes a form of divine judgment, followed by a utopian restoration. However, these formal features are significantly adapted to a more Deuteronomistic theology of sin, punishment, repentance and restoration. The final woes are not a climax of evil against the righteous, but punishment from God for breach of covenant.

23:22 There will be a great punishment from the Lord for the actions of that generation. He will deliver them to the sword, judgment, captivity, plundering, and devouring. 23:23 He will arouse against them the sinful nations...

The nations are pawns of God, and angels, good or evil, are strikingly absent. The turning point is human repentance, rather than divine intervention. The restoration is gradual, and was probably understood as having already begun.

23:26 In those days the children will begin to study the laws, to seek out the commands, and to return to the right way. 23:27 The days will begin to become numerous and increase, and humankind as well—generation by generation and day by day until their lifetimes approach one thousand years and to more years than the number of days (had been).

Jubilees 23 is unusual, to say the least, in its combination of literary features and theology drawn from early apocalypses, Deuteronomy, Psalm 90, and Isaiah.

The chapter also gives a vague clue to the author's position on resurrection of the body and the afterlife of the individual, which seem to have been issues at the time.

23:30 Then the Lord will heal his servants. They will rise and see great peace. He will expel his enemies. The righteous will see (this), offer praise, and be very happy forever and ever. They will see all their punishments and curses on their enemies. 23:31 Their bones will rest in the earth and their spirits will be very happy. They will know that the Lord is one who executes judgment but shows kindness to hundreds and thousands and to all who love him.

The ones who rise were not necessarily dead, or if they were dead their rising seems to be for a moment of vindication before returning to a state better described as resting in peace than an afterlife.

The elevation of Levi (*Jub.* 30–32)

If one had to judge from Genesis and the first half of Exodus, it would seem the Levites had no distinction other than morally dubious violence. Indeed, the elevation of the Levites to priestly status under the watch of Moses the Levite might have appeared to be self-serving. Again, *Jubilees* more than compensates with abundant arguments from merit and divine will for the elevation even before Levi was born. The first hint of the status of Levi appears on the first day of creation, when God establishes a three-fold hierarchy of angels, which, it becomes clear, corresponds to the Levites, all Israel, and the other nations. Priestly functions are attributed to the great ancestors Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Isaac. When Isaac is no longer able to perform his priestly duty, the status passes directly to Levi. *Jubilees* gives at least six justifications for the elevation of Levi: the merit of slaughtering the Shechemites in defense of endogamy (*Jub.* 30:18–24), a prophetic voice through Isaac (*Jub.* 31:14–15), the testimony of Jacob (*Jub.* 31:32), the testimony of the angel of the presence (*Jub.* 31:32), Levi's dream-vision (*Jub.* 32:1), and application of the law of tithes (*Jub.* 32:2–3). Among these, Isaac's prophetic blessing may be the most interesting because it enumerates the roles attributed to the Levites.

31:13 He turned to Levi first and began to bless him first. He said to him:
'May the Lord of everything – he is the Lord of all ages – bless you and your sons throughout all ages.
31:14 May the Lord give you and your descendants extremely great honor;
may he make you and your descendants (alone) out of all humanity approach him

to serve in his temple like the angels of the presence and like the holy ones.
The descendants of your sons will be like them in honor, greatness, and holiness.
May he make them great throughout all the ages.
31:15 They will be princes, judges, and leaders of all the descendants of Jacob's sons.
They will declare the word of the Lord justly
and will justly judge all his verdicts.
They will tell my ways to Jacob
and my paths to Israel.
The blessing of the Lord will be placed in their mouths,
so that they may bless all the descendants of the beloved.
31:16 Your mother named you Levi,
and she has given you the right name.
You will become one who is joined to the Lord
and a companion of all Jacob's sons.
His table is to belong to you;
you and your sons are to eat (from) it.
May your table be filled throughout all history;
may your food not be lacking throughout all ages.
31:17 May all who hate you fall before you,
and all your enemies be uprooted and perish.
May the one who blesses you be blessed,
and any nation who curses you be cursed'.

Besides temple service the Levites have the functions of political leadership, legal judgment, teaching, and blessing.

The praise of the Levites and the overlap between the roles attributed to the Levites and the book of *Jubilees* itself (interpreting laws, teaching) suggests that the author was a Levite. The author may or may not have been a priest. It is at least somewhat curious that *Jubilees* makes no distinction between priests and Levites, as is emphasized in what we today call the Priestly Source (but not Deuteronomy). The book of *Jubilees* is set before the consecration of the sons of Aaron ("until the time when my sanctuary is built," *Jub.* 1:27), which somewhat explains why the narratives and themes surrounding Aaron are deferred. However, one might have expected some anticipation of Aaron's distinction, such as in the heavenly hierarchy of angels, or the predictive blessings of Abraham, Isaac, Rebecca and Jacob. It stands to reason that the author viewed the classification "Levite" as more fundamental and theologically significant than the distinctions of priests and priestly families. By the mid-second century BCE, equality among all Levites was apparently no longer an issue, and it would have taken more than silence to argue against the distinction of priests over other Levites. The author may well have been a priest who simply deferred matters of priestly politics in the work at hand.

Jacob and Esau (*Jub.* 35–38)

The narratives concerning Jacob and Esau should be understood primarily as addressing interpretive issues in Genesis, especially making Jacob perfectly righteous and his rival perfectly wicked (although his sons are more consistent in their wickedness). Secondly, the narratives may be mined for hints of the perceived or proposed relationship with the Idumeans (Edomites) in the second century BCE.

Whereas Genesis leaves Jacob and Esau with an amicable separation, *Jubilees* finds more to the story. Esau recognizes Jacob's blessing, but his sons persuade him to attack.

38:1 After this Judah spoke to his father Jacob and said to him: 'Draw your bow, father; shoot your arrow; pierce the enemy; and kill the foe. May you have the strength because we will not kill your brother, since he is near to you and, in our estimation, he is equal to you in honor'. 38:2 Jacob then stretched his bow, shot an arrow, pierced his brother Esau [on his right breast], and struck him down. [Esau's allies are routed by Jacob and his sons in 38:3–8.] Esau's four sons ran away with them. They left their slain father just as he had fallen on the hill that is in Aduram. 38:9 Jacob's sons pursued them as far as Mt. Seir, while Jacob buried his brother on the hill that is in Aduram and then returned to his house. 38:10 Jacob's sons pressed hard on Esau's sons in Mt. Seir. They bowed their necks to become servants for Jacob's sons. 38:11 They sent to their father (to ask) whether they should make peace with them or kill them. 38:12 Jacob sent word to his sons to make peace. So they made peace with them and placed the yoke of servitude on them so that they should pay tribute to Jacob and his sons for all time. 38:13 They continued paying tribute to Jacob until the day that Jacob went down to Egypt. 38:14 The Edomites have not extricated themselves from the yoke of servitude which Jacob's sons imposed on them until today.

Although it is tempting to look for times in the second century when the relationship or events described best fit, the author may have been less concerned with contemporary politics than issues of interpretation beyond Genesis, such as Numbers 24:17–19.

The jubilee of jubilees (*Jub.* 50)

Not until the end of the book do we learn what may rightly be considered the real reason for giving a chronology from creation to Moses in terms of jubilee periods. Leviticus 25 calls for the Israelites to count forty-nine years and proclaim release from slavery and return to ancestral land in the fiftieth year. *Jubilees* applies the same principle on a macro-scale. God counts forty-nine periods of history (that is forty-nine jubilee periods of forty-nine years each), and in the fiftieth period, releases the Israelites from slavery in Egypt and returns them to their ancestral homeland.

50:4 For this reason I have arranged for you the weeks of years and jubilees—forty-nine jubilees from the time of Adam until today, and one week and two years. It is still forty years off (for learning the Lord's commandments) until the time when he leads (them) across to the land of Canaan, after they have crossed the Jordan to the west of it.

The revelation of the book of *Jubilees* occurs just after the exodus from Egypt in the fiftieth jubilee, in the year 2410 of creation ($49 \times 49 + 7 + 2$). After forty years of wandering in the wilderness, in the year 2450 (50×49 years), the Israelites return to their ancestral land and complete the jubilee of jubilees.